

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL  
2101 Constitution Avenue Washington, D.C. 20418

June 18, 1992

TO: Josh Lederberg, Pief Panofsky, and John Steinbruner  
FROM: Jo Husbands  
SUBJECT: Sverdlovsk Chronology

Since the dates for various events related to the explanation the Soviets gave CISAC and the NAS about Sverdlovsk are confused (the Post story is wrong, for example), I went back over the meeting/trip reports and put together the attached chronology. Also included is the Wall Street Journal article and Frank Press' letter after the Meselson meeting at the NAS. Hope you find these useful.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. (Pief, copies of the meeting reports will go out to you FedEx this afternoon.) Good luck.

6/18/92

CHRONOLOGYCISAC AND THE SVERDLOVSK STORYAugust 1986.

Matthew Meselson visits Moscow and receives extensive briefings from 4 physicians, all affiliated with Russian government of Soviet Academy of Medicine. As far as we know, this is the first time a private U.S. citizen has been given this much detail about what supposedly happened in Sverdlovsk. (We have a copy of his trip report.)

October 8-9,  
1986

The first CISAC BW meeting is held in Moscow. Josh Lederberg and Evgeniy Sverdlov are the chairs. CISAC receives a briefing from Nikiforov similar to that given Meselson during the meeting and also has an informal question and answer session with Nikiforov and a colleague. CISAC is apparently the second American group to hear the briefing. Both Sagdeev and Ivanov are present at the meeting, which is sponsored by the ASUSSR, along with other ASUSSR scientists.

April 29-May  
1, 1987

Regular CISAC meeting in Washington, with BW on the agenda to report on October meeting. Plate reports for Soviet side, although he had not attended. According to meeting report, he says that "between the information they had shared with the NAS delegation, with Matt Meselson, and at the BWC Review Conference in Geneva last fall, they hoped that the Sverdlovsk incident had been discussed sufficiently so there would be no need to return to it. Osipyan emphasized the same point in his closing remarks." ... "He [Panofsky] said the point of the committee had always been that procedurally the USSR had been in violation of the BWC by failing to provide adequate information concerning the 1979 Sverdlovsk outbreak. Panofsky said he was pleased that procedurally this situation was very much improved in this and other forums."

April 11,  
1988

Public meeting held at NAS to hear presentation from three Soviet physicians and public health officials (Nikiforov, Burgasov, Sergiev). This meeting is at request of Matt Meselson. No formal NAS or IOM sponsorship, although IOM hosts a dinner for them after the meeting. About 75 people attend the meeting, including press and their is subsequent coverage. A letter from Frank Press to the Wall Street Journal in response to an editorial in November 1990 (after Gorbachev wins the Nobel Prize) makes this clear and says that NAS does not endorse explanation.

May 9-11.  
1988

Second CISAC BW meeting is held in Washington. Sverdlovsk is not on the agenda, but Meselson attends as an observer and reports on the April meeting. According to the meeting report, Sverdlov said "he had heard about the Sverdlovsk case for the first time at the meeting of these two committees in Moscow in 1986. He said he had been convinced by Nikiforov's presentation. But Sverdlov acknowledged that questions remained, partly because the Americans did not know Nikiforov and they did not know how much they could trust him."